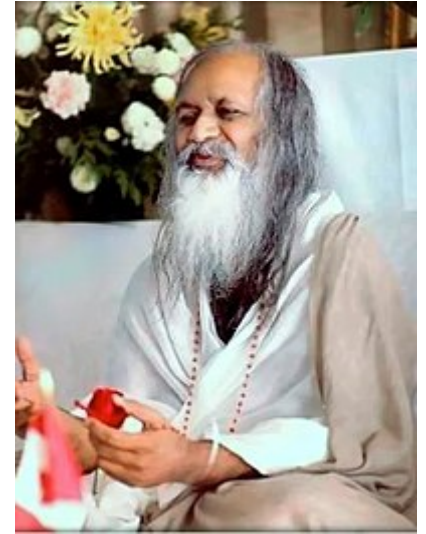


# Transcendental Meditation

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**Transcendental Meditation (TM)** refers to a specific form of silent, mantra meditation and less commonly to the organizations that constitute the Transcendental Meditation movement.<sup>[1][2]</sup> Maharishi Mahesh Yogi created and introduced the TM technique and TM movement in India in the mid-1950s.

The Maharishi taught thousands of people during a series of world tours from 1958 to 1965, expressing his teachings in spiritual and religious terms.<sup>[3][4]</sup> TM became more popular in the 1960s and 1970s, as the Maharishi shifted to a more technical presentation, and his meditation technique was practiced by celebrities. At this time, he began training TM teachers and created specialized organizations to present TM to specific segments of the population such as business people and students. By the early 2000s, TM had been taught to millions of people; the worldwide TM organization had grown to include educational programs, health products, and related services.



Maharishi Mahesh Yogi

The TM technique involves the use of a silently-used sound called a mantra, and is practiced for 15–20 minutes twice per day. It is taught by certified teachers through a standard course of instruction, which costs a fee that varies by country. According to the Transcendental Meditation movement, it is a non-religious method for relaxation, stress reduction, and self-development. The technique has been seen as both religious<sup>[5]</sup> and non-religious; sociologists, scholars, and a New Jersey judge and court are among those who have expressed views on it being religious or non-religious.<sup>[4][6][7]</sup> The United States Court of Appeals upheld the federal ruling that TM was essentially "religious in nature" and therefore could not be taught in public schools.<sup>[8][9]</sup>

TM is one of the most widely practiced and researched meditation techniques.<sup>[10][11]</sup> It is not possible to say whether it has any effect on health as the research, as of 2007, is of poor quality.<sup>[12][13]</sup> Other reviews have found no effect on weight, alcohol misuse, or pain compared to controls.<sup>[14]</sup>

## Contents

**History**

**Technique**

**Movement**

**Health effects**

**Maharishi Effect**

**Controversy**

**References**

**Further reading**

**External links**

## History

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The Transcendental Meditation program and the Transcendental Meditation movement originated with Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, founder of the organization, and continue beyond his death in 2008. In 1955,<sup>[15][16][17]</sup> "the Maharishi began publicly teaching a traditional meditation technique"<sup>[18]</sup> learned from his master Brahmananda Saraswati that he called Transcendental Deep Meditation<sup>[19]</sup> and later renamed Transcendental Meditation.<sup>[20]</sup> The Maharishi initiated thousands of people, then developed a TM teacher training program as a way to accelerate the rate of bringing the technique to more people.<sup>[20][21]</sup> He also inaugurated a series of world tours which promoted Transcendental Meditation.<sup>[22]</sup> These factors, coupled with endorsements by celebrities who practiced TM and claims that scientific research had validated the technique, helped to popularize TM in the 1960s and 1970s. By the late 2000s, TM had been taught to millions of individuals and the Maharishi was overseeing a large multinational movement.<sup>[23]</sup> Despite organizational changes and the addition of advanced meditative techniques in the 1970s,<sup>[24]</sup> the Transcendental Meditation technique has remained relatively unchanged.

Among the first organizations to promote TM were the Spiritual Regeneration Movement and the International Meditation Society. In modern times, the movement has grown to encompass schools and universities that teach the practice,<sup>[25]</sup> and includes many associated programs based on the Maharishi's interpretation of the Vedic traditions. In the U.S., non-profit organizations included the Students International Meditation Society,<sup>[26]</sup> AFSCI,<sup>[27]</sup> World Plan Executive Council, Maharishi Vedic Education Development Corporation, Global Country of World Peace and Maharishi Foundation.<sup>[28]</sup> The successor to Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, and leader of the Global Country of World Peace, is Tony Nader.<sup>[29][30]</sup>

## Technique

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The meditation practice involves the use of a silently-used mantra for 15–20 minutes twice per day while sitting with the eyes closed.<sup>[31][32]</sup> It is reported to be one of the most widely practiced,<sup>[33][34]</sup> and among the most widely researched, meditation techniques,<sup>[35][10][11][36]</sup> with hundreds of published research studies.<sup>[37][38][39]</sup> The technique is made available worldwide by certified TM teachers in a seven-step course,<sup>[40]</sup> and fees vary from country to country.<sup>[41][42]</sup> Beginning in 1965, the Transcendental Meditation technique has been incorporated into selected schools, universities, corporations, and prison programs in the US, Latin America, Europe, and India. In 1977 a US district court ruled that a curriculum in TM and the Science of Creative Intelligence (SCI) being taught in some New Jersey schools was religious in nature and in violation of the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.<sup>[6][43]</sup> The technique has since been included in a number of educational and social programs around the world.<sup>[44]</sup>

The Transcendental Meditation technique has been described as both religious and non-religious, as an aspect of a new religious movement, as rooted in Hinduism,<sup>[45][46]</sup> and as a non-religious practice for self-development.<sup>[47][48][49]</sup> The public presentation of the TM technique over its 50-year history has been praised for its high visibility in the mass media and effective global propagation, and criticized for using celebrity and scientific endorsements as a marketing tool. Also, advanced courses supplement the TM technique and include an advanced meditation program called the TM-Sidhi program.<sup>[50]</sup>

## Movement

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The Transcendental Meditation movement consists of the programs and organizations connected with the Transcendental Meditation technique and founded by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Transcendental Meditation was first taught in the 1950s in India and has continued since the Maharishi's death in 2008. The

organization was estimated to have 900,000 participants worldwide in 1977,<sup>[51]</sup> a million by the 1980s,<sup>[52][53][54]</sup> and 5 million in more recent years,<sup>[55][56][57][58][59][60][61]</sup> including some notable practitioners.

Programs include the Transcendental Meditation technique, an advanced meditation practice called the TM-Sidhi program ("Yogic Flying"), an alternative health care program called Maharishi Ayurveda,<sup>[62]</sup> and a system of building and architecture called Maharishi Sthapatya Ved.<sup>[63][64]</sup> The TM movement's past and present media endeavors include a publishing company (MUM Press), a television station (KSCI), a radio station (KHOE), and a satellite television channel (Maharishi Channel). During its 50-year history, its products and services have been offered through a variety of organizations, which are primarily nonprofit and educational. These include the Spiritual Regeneration Movement, the International Meditation Society, World Plan Executive Council, Maharishi Vedic Education Development Corporation, the Global Country of World Peace, and the David Lynch Foundation.

The TM movement also operates a worldwide network of Transcendental Meditation teaching centers, schools, universities, health centers, herbal supplements, solar panel, and home financing companies, plus several TM-centered communities. The global organization is reported to have an estimated net worth of USD 3.5 billion.<sup>[65][66]</sup> The TM movement has been characterized in a variety of ways and has been called a spiritual movement, a new religious movement,<sup>[67][68]</sup> a millenarian movement, a world affirming movement,<sup>[69]</sup> a new social movement,<sup>[70]</sup> a guru-centered movement,<sup>[71]</sup> a personal growth movement,<sup>[72]</sup> a religion, and a cult.<sup>[68][73][74][75]</sup> Additional sources contend that TM and its movement are not a cult.<sup>[76][77][78][79]</sup> Participants in TM programs are not required to adopt a belief system; it is practiced by atheists, agnostics and people from a variety of religious affiliations.<sup>[80][81][82][83]</sup> The organization has also been criticized as well as praised for its public presentation and marketing techniques throughout its 50-year history.

## **Health effects**

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It is not possible to say whether meditation has any effect on health, as the research is of poor quality,<sup>[12][13]</sup> and is marred by a high risk for bias due to the connection of researchers to the TM organization and by the selection of subjects with a favorable opinion of TM.<sup>[84][85][86]</sup> Most independent systematic reviews have not found health benefits for TM exceeding those produced by other relaxation techniques or health education.<sup>[12][87][88]</sup> A 2013 statement from the American Heart Association said that TM could be considered as a treatment for hypertension, although other interventions such as exercise and device-guided breathing were more effective and better supported by clinical evidence.<sup>[89]</sup> A 2014 systematic review and meta-analysis funded by the U.S. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality found no evidence that mantra meditation programs such as TM were effective in reducing psychological stress or improving well-being.<sup>[90][91]</sup> A 2015 systematic review and meta-analysis found that TM may effectively reduce blood pressure compared to control groups, although the underlying studies may have been biased and further studies with better designs are needed to confirm these results.<sup>[92]</sup> A 2014 Cochrane review found that it was impossible to draw any conclusions about whether TM is effective in preventing cardiovascular disease, as the scientific literature on TM was limited and at "serious risk of bias".<sup>[93]</sup>

The first studies of the health effects of Transcendental Meditation appeared in the early 1970s.<sup>[94]</sup> By 2004 the US government had given more than \$20 million to Maharishi University of Management to study the effect of meditation on health.<sup>[95]</sup>

## **Maharishi Effect**

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In the 1960s, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi described a paranormal effect claiming a significant number of individuals (1% of the people in a given area) practicing the Transcendental Meditation technique (TM) could have an effect on the local environment.<sup>[96]</sup> This hypothetical influence was later termed the Maharishi Effect. With the introduction of the TM-Sidhi program in 1976, the Maharishi proposed that the square root of one percent of the population practicing the TM-Sidhi program, together at the same time and in the same place, would increase "life-supporting trends". This was referred to as the "Extended Maharishi Effect".<sup>[97][98]</sup> Evidence, which TM practitioners<sup>[99]</sup> argue supports the existence of the effect, has been criticized as lacking a causal basis,<sup>[100]</sup> being derived from cherry-picked data,<sup>[101]</sup> and being based on the credulity of believers.<sup>[100][102]</sup>

## Controversy

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The organization has been the subject of controversies, and labelled a cult by several parliamentary inquiries or anti-cult movements in the world.<sup>[103][104][105][68][73][74]</sup> Some also say that TM and its movement are not a cult.<sup>[76][77][78][79]</sup> The TM movement has been characterized in a variety of ways and has been called a spiritual movement, a new religious movement,<sup>[67][68]</sup> a millenarian movement, a world affirming movement,<sup>[69]</sup> a new social movement,<sup>[70]</sup> a guru-centered movement,<sup>[71]</sup> a personal growth movement,<sup>[72]</sup> a religion. Participants in TM programs are not required to adopt a belief system; it is practiced by atheists, agnostics and people from a variety of religious affiliations.<sup>[80][81][82][83]</sup>

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- [Official website \(http://www.tm.org/\)](http://www.tm.org/)
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